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DISCUSSION GUIDE -- WHAT CAN THE RURAL CHURCH DO?

Reserve

At many recent conferences, the position and problems of the rural church have been analyzed. Many churches and church groups are carrying on constructive programs which involve action in the community. The purposes of this incomplete and experimental outline are to suggest specific activities and to assist in thinking through a church program which will improve rural living. The outline is divided into two parts, namely: (1) questions on functions and procedure of church group, and (2) suggestions for action by rural church.

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I. QUESTIONS ON FUNCTION AND PROCEDURE OF THE RURAL CHURCH

1. What are the functions of the church in rural life?
2. Why is the church concerned about:
 - (1) Farming and family income?
 - (2) Home and family life?
 - (3) Community life?
 - (4) Values of rural life and development of a rural philosophy?
3. What should the clergyman know about farming, the family, the community, values of rural life--and where and how will he obtain information?
4. What tools are needed--materials, methods, leadership--to assist the church group in rural life activities?
 - (1) Maps of parish and community
 - (2) Survey forms and questionnaires
 - (3) Assembled facts from community and governmental sources
 - (4) Assistance from outside agencies
 - (5) Cooperation with community organizations
 - (6) Discussion group materials
 - (7) Leadership training programs
 - (8) Action project suggestions
5. How should the church proceed?
 - (1) Within the church group--sermons, Sunday School, committee, discussion group
 - (2) With outside groups and agencies--assistance, cooperation
 - (3) Encourage, initiate, or action program

II. SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION BY RURAL CHURCH

A. WHAT CAN THE RURAL CHURCH DO TO IMPROVE FARMING AND FAMILY INCOME?

1. Providing farms for young couples
 - Parent-children partnerships
 - Training farms for young men and women
 - Clearing house--those who desire farms, and those who have farms to sell or rent
 - Parish loan plan
 - Supply of credit
 - Church homesteads
2. Security of tenure and ownership
 - Finance for farm ownership
 - Lease contracts
 - Transfer of land to farm operators
 - Landlord-tenant meetings
3. Conservation of soil and crops
 - Control of erosion--terracing, contour tillage, crop rotations, strip cropping, reforestation, permanent grasses
 - Use of green and stable manures
 - Commercial fertilizers
 - Soil Conservation districts
 - Land use study
 - Stewardship of resources

4. Profitable enterprises

- Crops for food, feed, cash income
- Livestock for food, cash income
- Farm plans--arrangement of buildings and fields, crop rotations
- Adequate size of business for family
- Keeping of farm records

5. Efficient farm production and marketing practices

- Selection and treatment of seeds
- Control of insects and disease
- Selection and care of livestock
- Cultivation and harvesting of crops
- Use of labor and equipment
- Grading of products
- Selling in attractive form and package

6. Cooperation with neighbors

- Use of machinery, equipment, sires, storage
- Buying supplies for farm and family
- Selling farm products
- Quality program
- Philosophy and principles of cooperation

7. Training of farmers

- Use of educational services--state and federal agencies
- Evening classes and short courses
- Agriculture in schools
- Sponsor 4-H clubs
- Pride in agriculture and dignity of labor

8. Part-time farming for clergy

9. Family income outside the farm

10. Economic survey of community

- Farming--extent, practices, system
- Other sources of income for farm and village family
- Market outlets for products

B. WHAT CAN THE RURAL CHURCH DO TO IMPROVE HOME AND FAMILY LIFE?

1. Improve family relations

- Family planning conference
- Christian family committee
- Family night at home
- Family council
- Discussions at meal--suggested topics and procedure
- Social and recreational activities--picnics, regular periods for play, games, sports, songs, stories, vacations
- Fun with the family project--picnics, birthdays, celebrations, visiting, trips, camping
- Counseling service
- Church family suppers and picnics
- Home and family week for community

2. Improve housing and homes
 - Home beautification project
 - Construction of home furnishings
 - Annual prizes for improvements of house and furnishings
 - Plant flowers and shrubs program
 - Home planning--arrangement, financing, construction
 - Work simplification program
 - Budget and records for family
3. Raising children and youth
 - Child study association
 - Topics on PTA program
 - Nursery for mothers who work outside house
 - Discussion groups for young couples
 - Courses--preparation for marriage and homemaking
 - Camping program for youth--work camps
 - Youth meetings in homes
 - Sponsor Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts
4. Better family health
 - Health habits
 - Sanitation project
 - Diet studies
 - Family gardens
 - Use of local health facilities
 - Food preparation project
5. Educational and cultural programs
 - Use of library facilities by family
 - Church library and distribution of publications
 - Reading lists
 - Reading habits--magazines and books
 - Radio programs--suggestions
6. Religious foundation
 - Christian principles in daily life--discussion, reading, application
 - Religious education and worship in home
 - Christian youth program
 - Reverence of nature
7. Survey of homes and family life
 - Conditions of homes
 - Family activities

C. WHAT CAN THE RURAL CHURCH DO TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY LIFE?

1. Farm organization and cooperatives
 - Membership in national and state farm organizations--in cooperatives
 - Train children and youth in group action and cooperation
2. Educational and cultural opportunities
 - School program to fulfill needs of children, youth and adults--agriculture, home economics, manual arts, music, art
 - Leadership training program--function and skills, for officers and committee chairmen of community organizations

Community library
Neighborhood discussion and recreation groups
Use of school teachers during summer
Youth counseling and guidance
Clubs--musical, art, drama
Camp for youth, adults, church groups
Rural service center--for distribution of materials, committee meetings

3. Health and nutrition

Safety programs
Group health--hospitalization, surgery, medical service
Sanitation and disease control
County health unit and program
Community hospital and clinic
Nutrition conference and program
Use of nutrition and health services and facilities
Prenatal and postnatal clinic

4. Avocational and recreational opportunities

Community center and committee
Recreational facilities--building, grounds for baseball, hobby shop
Training leaders and counselors
Clubs and groups--hobby clubs, competitive sports, nature study groups

5. Citizenship

Public forums
Discussion of election issues
Youth citizenship project
Use of local and county officials

6. Public and private services

Parks, playgrounds, recreation centers
Rural electrification
Hard-surfaced roads
Telephones
Fire department
Use of governmental services

7. Community understanding and cooperation

Community church council, group ministry
Community council
Special committees--youth, communities chest, health
Inter-group meetings--town and country, farm and business, farm and labor, inter-racial
Community days--homecoming, picnic, exhibitions, hobby shows,
4-H club fairs
Beautification--churches, homes, farmsteads, highways
Community score cards

8. Survey of community organizations, programs and services

Functions and structure
Leadership
Constructive and destructive influences

D. WHAT CAN THE RURAL CHURCH DO TO BRING ABOUT AN APPRECIATION OF THE VALUES OF RURAL LIFE, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RURAL PHILOSOPHY?

1. Emphasis on value and growth of individual
Responsibilities, decision making--and character formation
Spirit of independence, self reliance, liberty-loving attitude
Growth and creative experiences--intellectual, scientific, spiritual,
artistic
The human soul--significance and growth
On individual personality and not on wealth except as a means
Ideals from daily life experiences
2. Family life
Relationship of home and business
Contributions of children
Farm life and character training
Maturing experiences for children
Unity, belonging to, interdependence, loyalty, sacrifice
Social, recreational and spiritual life
Security--economic and personal
3. Group experiences
Neighborhood life
Community experience
Activity in organizations
Opportunities for personal growth and satisfaction and for service
Fellowship in family and community
Concern about neighborhood
4. Contribution to democracy
Both individual and group experiences--compromises between
Responsibilities of ownership, operation, management
Individualism and cooperation--experiences
Voluntary participation in independent groups
Responsibilities in farm life--discipline from within
5. Stewardship of resources
Contribution to preservation of the civilization
Reverance of land, the earth, nature, growing things
Significance of conserving, saving, using wisely-- to self,
children and future generations
Ownership not absolute--trusteeship to conserve and improve
6. Professional attitude
Pride in job, love of occupation
Dignity and importance of manual work
Combination of manual labor and intellectual effort
Farming as a livelihood and as a way of life
7. Cultural and recreational opportunities
Beauty of nature--change, diversity
Creative use of leisure

8. Growth and progress

Unfolding of nature

Christian society

Application of science--as a means, not an end

Constructive and optimistic forces--trends, opportunities

Religions and material

9. Contributions to urban and national life

Population source

Attitudes, skills and understandings

Religious foundation

Extension of democracy--character training, experience in methods,
understanding of philosophy, distribution of property and income
Understanding by rural people of national forces, trends, policies--
and their place in scheme of things

10. Special rural life programs

Rural Life Sunday

Harvest Festival

Rural life conference